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Municipal Building
Texas Boulevard at Third Street
Texarkana
Bowie County
Texas

HABS No. TX-230

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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TEX
19-TEX

HABS No. TX-230

AMERICA'S CITY HALLS
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
TEXARKANA, TEXAS

Name: Municipal Building
Texarkana, Texas

Location: Texas Boulevard at Third Street, Texarkana, Bowie County, Texas

Present Owner, Present Occupant, Present Use:

City of Texarkana, Texas
Municipal Offices

Significance: Since its completion in 1925, this structure has served as the Municipal Office Building and has housed the Sixth District Court of Civil Appeals. In addition, it is the location of Federal Credit Union Charter Number One, the Morriss Sheppard Texarkana Federal Credit Union, which was chartered October 1, 1934, and is still active.

The Austin, Texas architectural firm of Page and Page collaborated with the local firm of Witt, Seibert, and Halsey to design this Neo-Classical Revival structure.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building was erected in 1924-25. It was dedicated on November 12, 1925, with a spectacular ceremony which included a parade and a banquet. (See attached articles taken from the Four States Press, November 12 and 13, 1925.)
2. Architect: C. H. Page and Brother of Austin, Texas and Witt, Seibert, and Halsey of Texarkana, Texas in a joint venture, were architects on the Municipal Building. According to the minutes of the Texarkana, Texas City Council meeting of January 22, 1924, Mr. Page agreed to perform the engineering work and design the plans, while Mr. Witt said he would prepare the working drawings and write specifications, and would also supervise the construction (for \$50.00 per week).¹ The architects agreed to perform their services for 5% of the cost of the building.² According to the minutes of the City Council meeting, the voters of Texarkana had approved, in a special election (by a vote of 881 to 149) on August 21, 1923, the issuance of \$200,000 in bonds for the purpose of erecting and completing a new municipal building.³ An advisory committee for the project consisted of John J. King, W. A. McCartney, and John W. Wheeler.⁴

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: When the plans for the new Municipal Building were complete, advertisements for bids were placed in the Four States Press in Texarkana, Texas and in the Southern Construction News in Memphis, Tennessee. On July 16, 1924, the City Council met at 8:00 p.m. for the purpose of opening bids on the proposed Municipal Building, which were as follows:

General

Contractors --	1. A. B. Cupp	\$175,000
	2. Walker Construction Co.	169,325
	3. Brashears Construction Co.	186,950
	4. J. S. Casey	172,266
	5. Joplin-Marshall Construction Co.	178,000
	6. Billows-McClay Construction Co.	173,837
	7. Stewart-McGehee Construction Co.	160,000
	8. Murch Brothers Construction Co.	149,050
	9. Kreipe-Schafer Co.	172,490
	10. J. H. Reddick	167,052

(These bids were for terra cotta; alternate bids were accepted for algonite, but it appears that they were not considered because of cost.)

Heating

Contractors --	1. G. R. Rieck	\$7,620
	2. Sademann H. & P. Co.	9,273
	3. Kennison	8,361

Plumbing

Contractors --	1. Robison Brothers	\$11,000
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Plumbing and Heating

Contractors --	1. Fitzgerald Plumbing & Heating Co.	\$22,900
	2. Horiath	20,200
	3. Hoffman & Daley	16,488

Wiring

Contractors --	1. Martin Wright Electric Co.	\$4,484
	2. Logan Electric Co.	3,855
	3. J. M. Johnson Co.	4,528
	4. Texarkana Electric Co.	4,975
	5. Kirkwood & Wharton	5,141

The general contract was awarded to Murch Brothers for \$149,050; the plumbing and heating contract was awarded to Daley and Hoffman for \$16,488; the wiring contract was awarded to Logan Electric for \$3,855.⁵

4. Original plans and construction: The original plans for the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building cover 27 pages, and are signed by the architect. R. F. Taylor of Dallas served as the mechanical engineer, while R. O. Jameson was the consulting engineer. The plans are currently located in the Public Works Department on the third floor of the Municipal Building.

Included in the original plans were specifications and cut sheets for such items as wood and brass ceiling fans and brass-based light fixtures to be located throughout the building. It is not known whether any alterations to the plans were required, but on June 9, 1925, Mrs. L. A. Lawson, representing the Texarkana Women's Club, appeared before the Council to request that a women's restroom be provided in the new Municipal Building. Mr. N. L. Dalby supported Mrs. Lawson's request.⁶

The four-story building was constructed to house the Municipal Offices on three floors and the Court of Civil Appeals on the fourth floor. It is rumored that this office space is part of a "deal" that was struck to entice the Court to locate in Texarkana.

5. Alterations and additions: Several modifications have been made over the years to the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building. In 1951, Peyton and Bosworth Architects of Shreveport, Louisiana designed alterations to the second floor courtroom and third floor office spaces. In 1968, Blaylock, Threet, Lasater, and Associates designed lighting and electrical modifications which would in turn provide for a new air conditioning system. The majority of the alterations concerned the ceiling and lighting designs: acoustical tile drop ceilings and fluorescent light fixtures were added. The three recessed windows on the second floor of the west side have been obstructed with brick "lattice work" which shields the exterior air conditioning units. On the north and west sides of the building, wood sash on the windows has been replaced with aluminum sash. The east and south windows remain unchanged. At points throughout the building, paneled partitions and walls have been added to increase the number of offices and maximize space.

B. Historical Context:

After the issuance in 1923 of \$200,000 in bonds to build a new Municipal Building, the City began to take proposals from architects interested in performing the work. It is unclear as to why the City Council wanted a joint venture on the design of the structure, but they requested that C. H. Page and Brother of Austin, Texas collaborate with Witt, Seibert, and Halsey of Texarkana, to which both parties agreed. When construction bids were opened on July 16, 1924, Murch Brothers Construction Company was low bidder at \$149,050. A contract was awarded and work began immediately.

The Texarkana, Texas City Council met for the first time in the new Municipal Building on September 1, 1925.⁷ Mayor H. S. Brashear led the Council which was composed of Aldermen R. Berryman, H. F. DeFee, J. D. Carroll, L. S. Kennedy, and R. L. Hargrove. The Council, in trying to determine a dedication date for the new building, approved a request by Chamber of Commerce representative Mr. M. E. Melton that the opening be set for November 12, 1925, in conjunction with the Senator and Congressman Convention.⁸

The dedication was a glorious affair which included a parade, banquet, orchestra, and a special concert by the Fire Department's drum and bugle corps. A "surprise" unveiling took place during the dedicatory rites in the main court room on the second floor. Judge W. L. Estes, of the United States Court for the Eastern District of Texas drew aside an American flag which had draped a portrait of Judge John J. King of Texarkana. Judge Estes referred to Judge King as the "leader of this body of men," and discussed the part Judge King had played in the progress of Texarkana.⁹

Judge King's portrait was painted by H. L. Brewer, a Philadelphia portrait painter. Born July 26, 1863, Judge King was educated in the public schools of Bowie County, Texas. He was admitted to the bar in January of 1886, and was elected county attorney the following November, and then re-elected to serve a second term. Shortly thereafter, he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives, serving one term. Following his short stint in the State Legislature, he was drafted by the Democrats as their nominee for Bowie County Judge, and was elected. After serving two terms as County Judge, he retired from politics to practice law.¹⁰ (See Judge John J. King's biography in Chandler, History of Texarkana for more information.)

Another political figure associated with the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building is Senator Morriss Sheppard of Texarkana. Senator Sheppard served in the United States Congress as a Representative from Texas from 1902 to 1913, and as a United States Senator from 1913-1941, where he became the dean of the Senate.¹¹

Senator Sheppard's authorship of the Federal Credit Union Act made credit available on low terms for usual needs and necessities. It is for that reason that Federal Credit Union Charter Number One is located in the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building where the Morriss Sheppard Texarkana Federal Credit Union is still active. (See Morriss Sheppard's biography in Chandler, History of Texarkana for further information.)

Throughout the years since 1925, only minor changes have been made to the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building. Since Alderman Kennedy stated in January of 1926 that "there should be some flowers and shrubbery planted around the building," City staff members have been working to beautify the grounds and make the Municipal Building a landmark of which citizens can be proud. The historic flavor of the building is still present with the tile floors, wrought iron staircases, and brass light fixtures. And, although offices have changed places from time to time, mayors have come and gone, and much progress has marked the years since 1925, the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building still has the mustering character of a true "City Hall."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

The Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building is a four-story brick and terra cotta structure with a rectangular plan and a flat roof. The dimensions are approximately 110' x 72'. There are wood sash 6/6 and 9/9 windows on the south and east elevations, and aluminum sash windows on the west and north. The deeply-coursed base is terra cotta, with three entrances on the west elevation recessed behind segmentally arched openings. Located above the fourth floor windows is a terra cotta cornice with dentils; the brick parapet has a relief sculpture on the west side. The original building contained an ice box with coils for a water cooling system.

B. Description of Interior:

White tile floors, original to the Municipal Building, remain in most of the public areas, including stairwells and corridors. Elsewhere, carpeting and vinyl floor coverings have been added. Eight-inch marble base still abounds throughout the building. Original black wrought iron staircases with oak handrails remain intact from first to fourth floors. The elevator, adorned with brass handrails and escutcheon plates, is 1924 vintage. Both interior and exterior brass light fixtures are original to the building, including some of the globes.

The Municipal Court Room, which serves as the City Council Chambers as well, is located on the second floor. It is decorated in red and gold, and adorned with a City seal. Also located on the second floor are the City Manager's Office and the Finance Office.

The first floor houses the Mayor/City Council Office, as well as Personnel, Court Clerk, Tax and Inspection Departments. A first floor candy shop, which caters to City employees but is frequented by others in the downtown area, adds a special character to the building.

Located on the third floor are the Public Works, Planning, Administrative Services, and Parks and Recreation Departments, as are the Chief of Police and the City Attorney's Offices.

The fourth floor houses the Sixth District Court of Civil Appeals, including a courtroom, law library, and offices for three justices and the court clerks.

C. Site:

The Municipal Building, which faces west, is located in the Central Business District. Although the "front" of the building faces Texas Boulevard, a major thoroughfare, the Third Street "side" is commonly used as an entrance. Third Street, which was made a one-way street in 1977, allows easy access to the north entrance, and provides both on-street and off-street parking for citizens. Due north of the Municipal Building, across Third Street, is a public employee parking lot, which is lined with crepe myrtle bushes.

While the north and west sides of the building are landscaped, it is bounded on the east by the Texarkana, Texas Police Station and on the south by an alley and retail buildings.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings: Dated 1924, the plans are now located in the Public Works Department on the Third Floor of the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building.

See Page 8

B. Early Views: An early photograph is included of the exterior of the Municipal Building (dates back to 1920's). Duplicated from a picture postcard at the Texarkana Historical Museum, the reproduction is by Les Eugene, Public Information Specialist for the City of Texarkana, Texas.

C. Footnotes:

¹W. H. James, City Secretary, Minutes, Texarkana, Texas City Council Meeting, January 22, 1924.

²Ibid., January 23, 1924.

³Ibid., August 31, 1923.

⁴Ibid., November 22, 1923.

⁵Ibid., July 16, 1924.

⁶Ibid., June 9, 1925.

⁷Ibid., September 1, 1925.

⁸Ibid., October 22, 1925.

⁹Four States Press, Friday, November 13, 1925, p. 7.

¹⁰Barbara Overton Chandler, History of Texarkana and Bowie and Miller Counties Texas-Arkansas (Shreveport, La.: J. Ed Howe, Publisher, 1939), pp. 326-28.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 330-31.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary sources:

Chandler, Barbara Overton. History of Texarkana and Bowie and Miller Counties Texas-Arkansas. (Shreveport, La.: J. Ed Howe, Publisher, 1939).

Four States Press, November 12 and 13, 1925. (Microfilm, Palmer Memorial Library, Campus of Texarkana Community College, Texarkana, Texas).

Minutes Books, City of Texarkana, Texas 1923-25. (Located in the second floor vault, Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building).

2. Secondary sources:

Texarkana, Texas Historic Resource Survey, prepared by Daniel Hardy and David Moore, January, 1981. (Located in the Administrative Services Division of the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building).

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

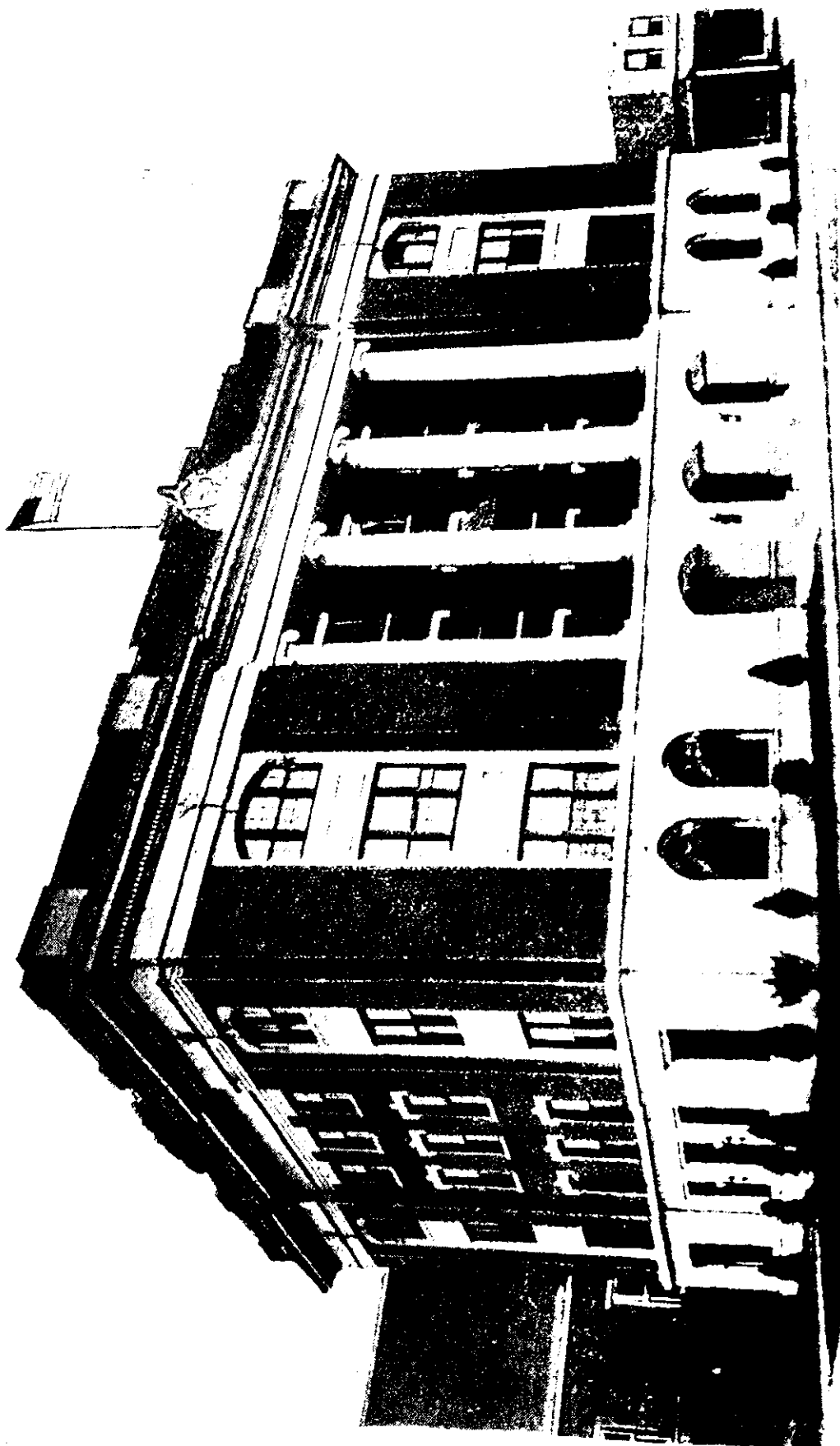
Various issues of the Four States Press and the Texarkana Gazette and Minute Books from the Texarkana, Texas City Council Meetings may contain additional information pertaining to the Texarkana, Texas Municipal Building.

F. Supplemental Material: See attachments-

- 1) "Texarkana Host at Fetes Today," Four States Press, November 12, 1925.
- 2) "Magnificent New Building is Dedicated: Portrait of Judge King is Unveiled During Formal Ceremonies," Four States Press, November 13, 1925.
- 3) Mayors, City of Texarkana, Texas.

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City of Texarkana, Texas
July, 1981

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City of Texarkana, Texas
July, 1981



CITY HALL TERRELL TEXAS